

WHAT IT COSTS THE FLORIDA STATE CONVICT LESSEES PER CAPITA FOR EVERY CONVICT HANDLED

Average Cost for Four Years Lease, They Say, Is Over \$1.60 Per Day—Itemized Statements By Lessee Manager S. A. Rawls.

The following is from the Ocala Banner of February 9:

The article on the state convict system in Sunday's Times-Union has attracted so much attention—especially in Ocala, where the enlightened and progressive methods employed by the present lessees, the Florida Naval Stores and Commission Co., are appreciated at their true value—that The Banner has secured from Mr. S. A. Rawls, of this city, the manager of the convicts for the lessees, a copy of a letter addressed by him to the Hon. B. E. McLin, Commissioner of Agriculture, giving the cost in detail of operating the convicts.

These figures will prove of value to all who are in any way interested in the convict lease. They should prove of interest to the community in general, as they tend to show that the lessees can, in the very nature of the contract, derive no such profit from the contract as many imagine; and they should be of especial value to turpentine operators, phosphate miners, etc., as indicating the narrow margin upon which the Florida Naval Stores and Commission Company is operating in this direction.

It is obvious, from these figures, that, under existing conditions in this state, no future lessee can possibly afford to pay more than the contract price of \$151.50 a head, per annum, for the convicts without doing two things: Such lessee must not only lower the high standard of living for these prisoners, which has from the very beginning been insisted upon by Commissioner McLin and the board of state institutions; but he will inevitably be forced to overwork an overtax the 63 per cent of able-bodied convicts in order to increase the earning power of his lease. And it need hardly be said that at this stage of the game public sentiment in this state will stand for no such doubtful mode of procedure "for revenue only."

Mr. Rawls's letter to the Commissioner of Agriculture follows:

Some Valuable Data.
Ocala, Fla., Jan. 16, 1905.
Hon. B. E. McLin, Commissioner of Agriculture, Tallahassee Fla.
Dear Sir:—Replying to your favor of the 10th inst., requesting information as to actual expense of operating Florida state prisoners during the

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term of the lease of this company, January 1, 1902, to December 31, 1905, I hand you herewith itemized statement of expenditures by the lessee company and their sub-lessees (exclusive of rental charge) for the four years ending December 31st, 1905, basing the annual per capita charge upon the amount actually disbursed during the years 1902, 1903 and 1904, and estimating the year 1905 to cost the same as exact average of the three years just closed.

"In order to arrive at a more satisfactory per diem charge for an able-bodied adult prisoner (as the labor-producing capacity of the prison population is of course the basis of lease) it has been found necessary, owing to the first cost of erecting and furnishing suitable quarters, etc., for the proper maintenance of the Florida state prisoners, to distribute this cost over a period of the entire four years of lease. I have, therefore, found it necessary, to equally distribute this amount, together with other amounts expended for hospital and farm, means of identification, disbursement account of escaped and recaptured prisoners, etc., over this four years period."

"The first point covered by this communication is 'the first cost and the necessary repairs, replacing articles worn out, lost and destroyed, based on each 25 prisoners under control for four years.' But, in order to save space, the sum total only is given here, as the list of such articles is a long one, comprising such minor items as 'furnishings for sleeping cell,' 'wash room,' etc. The total in question for 25 prisoners for 4 years is \$2,811.20.

An Important Point.

In his letter Manager Rawls here goes on to explain:

"In explanation of the above items of cost for stockade buildings, articles of service and animals required for the proper handling of convicts, we explain that at the end of four years stockade and building cannot be used for any other purpose; therefore are only worth salvage in shape of serviceable lumber that can be saved from same after demolition. This amount of lumber will hardly equal the cost of repairs to said stockade and buildings in four years, therefore this item is pure expense. Again, in working turpentine with prisoners on a four year contract, owing to the nature of their employment practically an additional stockade has to be built at the end of the second or third year, in order to bring the prisoners closer to their work. This we have not taken into consideration.

"Referring to the item of horses for mounted guards, the average serviceable life of a turpentine horse, used in the following prisoners, running dogs, etc., is from 12 to 18 months and the turpentine sub-lessees find that in four years the original cost of an animal for this purpose will have cost him three times his original cost; therefore, 300 per cent of said cost has to be charged as expense, estimating the whole at 300 per cent. Again, in the matter of dogs, convict dogs have an average life of one year; so again the dog that will be on hand at the end of four years has cost four times his original value, and of course three times of this has to be charged to loss account, or expense."

The next item is covered under the head of

"Annual Cost of Maintenance"

Pro rata per capita per annum, pro rata	1st cost.....\$ 28 11
Food, etc., per capita per annum, including tobacco, stamps, stationery, etc.....	69 90
Clothing (except night shirts) per capita per annum.....	36 00
Oil and fuel, per capita per annum.....	8 42
Guards, per capita per annum.....	87 00
Captains, per capita per annum.....	27 12
Horse feed, per capita per annum.....	21 60
Cook and general yard prisoner.....	28 90
Surgeon hire and medicine.....	6 00

\$312.05 \$313.95
In giving the cost of food stuffs, clothing, etc., we have based the same on wholesale prices which while correct in the main, does not exactly represent the exact amount disbursed in working convicts in small lots. We have reduced, for instance, the cost of feeding prisoners per month for an average by the sub-lessees of \$6.75 to \$5.80 on the above account.

Again, the item of captain hire is based on an average of \$50 per month, while in fact the captains of convicts in this state receive from \$20 per month to \$60 per month, but in a number of instances these higher-priced captains are handling large-bodies of convicts than 25, which makes a fair average of \$50.00."

"The expense incident to the general division of 921 prisoners in January, 1902, and the expense of recruiting 1,600 prisoners in the four years (estimating of course for 1905) will amount to about \$24,400, or a fraction over \$18 per each prisoner (per annum, \$4.50.)

"This item includes sheriffs' charges, transportation of arrivals and arrivals

ers from county jails to headquarters camp and then to fixed stations.

An Additional Expense.
"In addition to the above there has been expended and estimated to be disbursed:

On hospital and farm.....	\$30,000
For descriptions and photographs of prisoners.....	5,200
For rewards for captures.....	5,375
For advertising rewards for escaped prisoners.....	6,000
Operating leases.....	10,000

A total of.....\$60,575
Or per capita per annum, estimating the prison population to average daily 1075 prisoners.....\$ 14.00

"In the above group of expense we only give actual figures of expenditures to date, except we estimate the cost for hospital for 1905. In regard to the hospital item we advise that this institution has cost us, to date, nearly \$57,000, but as we estimate property to be worth \$30,000, we only note as actual expense \$30,000.

"Total expense per annum, per capita, exclusive of rental charge.....\$331.55
"In considering the above, we respectfully invite your attention to the fact that this company is required to, and does, take and maintain, 365 days in each year, all Florida state convicts, whether male or female, regardless of age, color or ability to perform manual labor, and that in receiving them direct from the minor places of restraint, as a result of such prior cellular confinement these prisoners are not fit to perform average daily labor for some time, thereby reducing the working capacity of the whole prison population on an average of 2 per cent per day which further increases the cost of working prisoners.

"Again, as the entire prison population is idle one-seventh of the year (Sundays) or a fraction over 14 per cent of same, and laboring capacity of the whole being further reduced about 1 per cent on account of time lost for holidays, it is therefore conclusive that fully 17 per cent of the total cost of \$520,000 in operating this lease (which includes rental charge) is expended where no value return is apparent, and viewed from a labor standpoint of actual days' services this company and their sub-lessees are paying for average adult labor, \$1.60 per working day as prescribed by law for prisoners."

Some Interesting Particulars.

"As near as we can value the true services of all the prisoners in the penitentiary, we can only place 63 per cent of the whole as actually able-bodied—that is, who can perform a full day's able-bodied male task; five per cent of the whole are entirely indigent and worthless; ten per cent of the whole are white men, the larger portion of whom can perform only very light labor; 5 per cent are women and boys, and 17 per cent are colored males, who, owing to their not being physically strong, are given employment as cooks, yard police, drivers of water wagons, water boys, etc. As the profit of operating this lease naturally can only be charged against the able-bodied laborer, if this 37 per cent was placed at its true value of 50 per cent of the able-bodied laborers, it would readily be seen that the cost of \$1.60 per diem would be much increased for the laborer himself."

A Georgia Comparison.

"In connection with the above itemized cost of handling Florida state prisoners, and the recent statements advanced that the state of Georgia was enjoying a much larger per capita annual income for hire of Georgia prisoners than the state of Florida for the hire of Florida state prisoners, the attached information furnished us by courtesy of the secretary of the pri-

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son commission of Georgia, may be of interest to you.

"A careful comparison of the lease system of the two states clearly shows that the State of Florida is not only receiving 16 per cent more per capita for all of Florida's prisoners than Georgia is for the flower of her prison population, or practically speaking her finest, longest-term, absolutely able-bodied male convicts. And further, practically 50 per cent more for each and every convict now in prison than the state of Georgia on the same basis.

"We desire to particularly point out to you that Georgia receives an average of \$225.14 per annum for the hire of 1,500 convicts, but disburses out of this fund the cost of wardens or captains, guards, surgeon hire, etc., which, if in amount exactly required by the board of commissioners of state institutions of the state of Florida, would be as follows, per capita per annum:

Cost of arms, horses, horse feed and dogs, etc.....	\$ 26 35
Guard hire, captains and wardens.....	114 12
Surgeon hire.....	6 00
Recruiting, transportation, etc.....	4 50
Escapes, rewards, etc.....	14 00
Unserviceable labor.....	3 30

A total of.....\$178 17
And leave net on 1,500 prisoners.....46 97
And further shows a deficit on 50 prisoners of.....28 17

"However, in view of the fact that the state of Georgia does not require photographic and detailed descriptions of her prisoners, does not supply dogs at first effort to recapture, does not require mounted guards, offers a small reward on postal card, and by a large proportion of her leased prisoners being in coal mines, etc., is able to materially decrease her guard corps and by other restrictions, is able to make a net showing of 50 per cent below Florida.

"The contention that Georgia retains absolute control of her prisoners, and that Florida does not, is untenable, as Georgia convicts and convict camps are not subject to more rigid or frequent inspections than Florida convicts and convict camps, and as well as we have been able to ascertain the requirements of the board of commissioners of state institutions of this state are more numerous, more exacting, more rigidly enforced than those of the prison commission of Georgia.

"We also call your attention to the food requirements for Georgia prisoners which, in comparison with that exacted by the board of commissioners of this state upon the lessee company, appear very favorable.

"Also must be taken into consideration that Georgia prisoners in the felony class are sentenced for 1 to 5 years, who, being designated as short term, are used on the county roads; those having sentences for longer than five years are leased; all women, persons under 16 years of age, all men who, in the judgment of the prison commission are eligible, are sent to the prison farm at the state's entire expense; and all prisoners under one year in the misdemeanor class are chain-gang prisoners.

"In the Florida courts prisoners are given state prison sentences from 2 months to life, of the first number the proportion being about 35 to 1 year, of the whole from 2 months to 1 year. And all as mentioned above are delivered to this company, at the county

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